



Congregational Connections

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ENCOURAGING WORDS FOR THE NEW YEAR FROM A "BEACON OF HOPE"

The beginning of a new year! And believe it or not, the start of my second year sharing in the ministry of our congregation with all of you. I am looking forward to 2022 and the possibilities that are before us.

2021 has been a difficult year for many of us for a multitude of reasons. And with the arrival of a new year there is hope that 2022 will be a bit brighter. Unfortunately, just last week the world lost one of its brightest beacons of hope, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. You all probably know he was a leader in the South African Anglican Church and a public figure who spoke out against the apartheid policies of his government. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 while enduring criticism from the political powers in his home country and from others who wanted more radical solutions to end the system of apartheid oppression. When that regime came to an end and Nelson Mandela was elected president in 1994, Tutu was selected to chair the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate past human rights abuses committed by both pro and anti-apartheid groups.

I always take strength from people like Desmond Tutu who are able to stay hopeful and resilient amidst so much difficulty, conflict and powerlessness. In the face of an entire system put in place to keep him and people like him powerless, and backed by the coercive power of political, economic, social, religious, and military forces, he could still say things like, **"Do your little bit of good where you are; it is those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."** While this might sound naïve and whimsical in the mouth of someone else, Archbishop Desmond Tutu saw it lived out in real life over the course of several decades. Doing his "little bit of good" and joined by hundreds of thousands of others doing their "little bit of good" they did indeed overwhelm the world and changed their nation.

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...ENCOURAGING WORDS CONTINUED...

In this new year, as we face the struggles and obstacles that are before us, may we have the resilience and the faith that kept people like Tutu going through all of their difficult times. Our difficulties are different, our challenges can't really be compared to theirs, yet the faith we will need has the same source. We can face anything with God's presence at our side. God has already given us the gifts necessary to overcome the obstacles before us if we will choose to use them.

And so, I close with another quote from Desmond Tutu, "God places us in the world as his fellow workers-agents of transfiguration. We work with God so that injustice is transfigured into justice, so there will be more compassion and caring, that there will be more laughter and joy, that there will be more togetherness in God's world." As we step into 2022 may our work and ministry produce the "compassion and caring", the "laughter and joy" that Tutu envisioned, may this new year be filled with the togetherness for which we all yearn.



Courage and Peace,
Pastor Scott

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CHURCH SCHOOL ON JANUARY 9

Church School will be learning about the visit of the Magi, the "wise men from the East" and the celebration of Epiphany during their class on January 9th. Using the story from the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12 the class will learn about this event which is usually celebrated on January 6th and brings to a close the "Twelve Days of Christmas." The kids will be making crowns and "star gazers" in which to view the star over Bethlehem that signaled to the wise men that a new king had been born.

Epiphany is an important but often overlooked holiday in comparison to Christmas here in the U.S. Did you know that Epiphany has been celebrated longer than Christmas? Christians first began celebrating Epiphany in the 2nd Century, while Christmas celebrations didn't get started until the 4th Century. The Catholic and Protestant churches have tended to emphasize the arrival of the wise men, while the Orthodox churches have tended to emphasize Jesus' Baptism by John as the "epiphany" or "manifestation" moment of Jesus' ministry and mission. Always so much to learn about Jesus, our church and living faithfully as disciples! Please plan to join us on January 9th!